

R. Bodmer
4476.f

THE
IMPORTANCE
R OF
SUNDAY SCHOOLS
AT THE
PRESENT CRISIS;
WITH A
SHORT ADDRESS
TO THE
PRELATES AND CLERGY
OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND;
EARNESTLY RECOMMENDING FURTHER EXERTIONS TO
MAKE THEM MORE GENERAL.

— ♦ —
BY A MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY
FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

— ♦ —
CANTERBURY:
PRINTED BY J. GROVE, IN HIGH-STREET.
SOLD BY B. LAW AND SON, AVE MARIA-LANE, LONDON;
W. BRISTOW, CANTERBURY, AND ALL
OTHER BOOKSELLERS.

THE
IMPORTANCE
OF
SUNDAY SCHOOLS



FOR THE
CLERGY

CHURCH OF ENGLAND
AND
THE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

BY A MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY
FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE

LONDON:
PRINTED BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD
AND BY T. & A. CO., 25, ABINGDON-ROAD, LONDON, E.C.

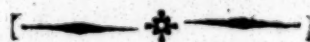


INTRODUCTORY
ADDRESS to the PUBLIC

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF

SUNDAY SCHOOLS

AT THE PRESENT CRISIS.



[PRICE SIX-PENCE.]



INTRODUCED BY
ADDRESS TO THE

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF

SUNDAY SCHOOLS

AT THE PRESENT CRISIS

[THREE VOLUMES]

ERRATA.

In note, page 16, for *remark* read *remarks*.

Page 17, in the second Latin verse, for *in-verit* read *in-venit*.

Page 19, line 4, for *contradiction* read *contradictions*.

Page 26, first Latin line, for *manus* read *munus*.

7 JU 66

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS, &c.



CONVINCED, as I am, that the institution, in favor of which I write, is beyond all others adapted to save this country from destruction, if patronized and encouraged as it deserves, I shall deliver what I have to say with greater freedom. The present crisis of affairs is certainly very alarming ; for the minds of men are in an uncommon manner agitated, and to what degree the ferment may extend, or what may be the result, 'tis impossible for human wisdom to foresee.

On such an occasion, it is natural for us all to consider in the first place, how those things are likely to be affected, which

B

we

we have been habituated to regard as of the greatest moment; and as I have always been accustomed to look upon Religion in this light, as securing to us an interest in a future world, and promoting also our temporal happiness, as the basis of civil society, the cement that holds us together, and what only can hold us together, in any tolerable state of order and union; I cannot help being anxious to contribute something to its preservation and support. On that ground I think myself justified in making this address.

That the complexion of the present times is such, as loudly to call on every friend of Religion, not only to step forth and declare on its side, but likewise to use all possible exertions in its defence, is too obvious to require proof. When the rulers of a great and powerful nation, our near neighbours, have with unparalleled audacity

city set our Saviour at nought, and even heard with applause a public avowal of Atheism in full Convention, it is high time surely for all, who believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ, to employ their united efforts, and to use more than ordinary vigilance, to prevent these impious and detestable opinions, which have produced such dreadful miseries in France, from spreading their contagious influence in Great Britain.

There was, in truth, no need for any Member of the new Government to rise up and declare himself an Atheist; as we had given the Assembly credit that the majority were of that persuasion, before Mr. Dupont's shocking declaration was made. For the actions of men speak a most expressive language, which is less liable to be misunderstood than words. Treachery,

treason, sacrilege, massacres, and the most barbarous acts of unprecedented injustice, sufficiently evince an apostacy from Christ, and shew what human nature is, when it has lost all sense of Religion. I will nevertheless freely confess that I concur with Mr. Fox* in believing that the French nation are not all Atheists. Indeed it appeared that a few even of the Convention, by the murmurs they expressed, during the above-mentioned execrable harangue, were far from approving it; and one of them rushed indignant out of such profane company on the occasion. But whatever may be the sentiments of these extraordinary Legislators, most of whom have repeatedly demonstrated the shallowness of their understandings, and may therefore be supposed capable of embracing almost any

* Mr. F. in one of his speeches on the Traiterous Correspondence Bill, ridiculed the idea of the French being all Atheists.

opinion, though ever so absurd or irrational; whether or not, they have, in general, carried their folly so far, as a certain person did in David's time, and have actually said in their hearts, there is no* God; it was absolutely necessary for their purposes, that the common people of France should be induced to think so; or that all moral and Christian principles should be erased from their hearts, and a savage ferocity substituted in their stead, that no fear or apprehension of

* Should any well disposed person feel an alarm, because some men, who affect the character of philosophers, have espoused the cause of Atheism, let him peruse the words with which that great man, the incomparable Sir Isaac Newton, (who by universal consent stands first on the list of true philosophers) concludes his noble work the Principia—*Deum summum necessario existere in confesso est, &c.* What follows tends to convey the most exalted idea of the Supreme Being—that he is—*totus sui similis, totus Oculas, totus Auris, totus Cerebrum, totus Brachium, totus vis sentiendi, intelligendi, et agendi; sed more minime humano, more minime corporeo, more nobis prorsus incognito, &c.*

divine vengeance might restrain them from the blackest crimes.

I will do the Convention the justice to confess (and it is the only instance of consistency I can discover in their proceedings) that the laws they have divulged have been very suitable to their avowed principles. Atheism is the acknowledged foundation of their Republic, and its code of statutes is truly worthy of such an original; being directly opposite and in full contradiction to the laws of God. This is a circumstance, which, detached from any other, would lead us to suppose, that consequences the most ruinous and horrid must result from those doctrines, which have been sanctioned by the Convention. For the laws of God were given by the benevolent Father of the Universe, for the express purpose of promoting the happiness of all his creatures. That they are naturally

turally fitted and adapted for this end, and will, when unobstructed by some accidental impediment, be productive of it in the common course of things, has been frequently proved, and illustrated by the ablest writers.* The long experience of many ages has shewn that, when duly observed, they have always answered their intended purpose. Whereas on the contrary, the code of the French Convention, in the space of a few months, increased the miseries of their unhappy country to so great a degree, by sapping the foundation of all confidence between man and man, and confounding all former ideas of right and wrong, that we have obtained by actual experience a proof of the truth of an old maxim—*Societas Atheorum nequit existere*. The wild notions of these

* Particularly by Bishop Butler in his *Analogy*, part 1, cap. 3, and in the *Sermons* of all our eminent Divines.

ignorant and infatuated plebeians tend as much to introduce anarchy and confusion in private families, as in public states. By annihilating the authority of parents over their children, and all dutiful affection of children towards their parents, what can be expected to follow, but all the evils of a house divided against itself—tyranny on the one hand, and rebellion on the other; the consequences of which, in the present savaged state of France, it might be apprehended would be very horrible; and they have indeed been such, as would exceed belief, if crimes equally atrocious had not been well authenticated and notorious.* So that there never was a more

* As a proof how effectually the Convention have abolished all idea of obligation to obey the fifth Commandment, it was positively averred in the public prints, that a man presented to the Jacobin Club, the heads of his father and mother, whom he had murdered, because he could not convert them to be patriots like himself; and that he obtained the applauses of the club.

deadly

deadly blow aimed against the quiet and happiness of the world, than the hellish opinions now in vogue at Paris, which we may reasonably suppose to have derived their origin from the grand enemy of mankind—the Father of all mischief, Patron of sedition and rebellion; who perhaps may be the more eager in fomenting the destruction of the inhabitants of the earth, having greater wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.*

If the waters of this troubled sea, or the torrent of French opinions had been confined within its own bed, as Mr. Sheridan, in one of his speeches, intimates it now is, it might be, as he asserts, no great matter to us how unquietly it rolled. But

* The Rev. Mr. Jones, in a Sermon, published A. D. 1789, considers the popular commotions then begun, which have since raged with greater fury, as signs of the approaching end of the world.

the

the fact is otherwise, French opinions have already gained footing in this country, and it is highly incumbent on every Englishman, who desires to live a quiet and peaceable life, to counteract them by all the means in his power. It is no secret, that a considerable time ago, when the communication between us and our neighbours on the other side of the water, was more easy than it is at present, they were so kind as to send, to be opened in this island, an infectious box, worse than Pandora's; the poison of which, it was too plain, took effect; particularly on some of our countrymen, who adore liberty as their idol, and are even ready to ~~exalt~~ her above the God of Heaven. Along with the principles of sedition, which were liberally disseminated among us when the box from Paris was opened, there can be no doubt that those of infidelity, which have operated so powerfully to serve the purposes of

exalt

of the regicides in France, would be copiously distributed; and very dangerous principles they are to us all; who have souls to be saved, or property to lose. For it may easily be conceived, that too many among us will listen with itching ears to those bewitching lessons of instruction, which allow an unbounded freedom of action, and throw aside every fetter by which vice has been held in subjection. The wisdom of his Majesty, his Ministers, and his Parliament, with the declared loyalty of the nation, have relieved us from the apprehensions we were under, with regard to our political Constitution; and it is no less the interest than the duty of every Christian, particularly of those, to whom the care of religion is entrusted, to guard that sacred deposit with equal jealousy from the ruffian attacks of Atheistical levellers; and to prevent that *pearl of great price, which has been so rudely trampled*

pled on by the swine of France from being treated with like indignity by their confederates in Great Britain. How, or in what manner this can be done to the greatest advantage, so as to produce the best and most lasting effects, there seems to be a concurrence in opinion of our eminent divines. Bishop Watson, in a very ingenious and instructive Charge, delivered to his Clergy, A. D. 1789, “ freely
 “ owns that his hopes of a general reformation of manners are founded on a
 “ reformation of the education of children, more than on that of men grown
 “ old, and hardened in vice :” And his Lordship afterwards, in strong terms, exhorts his clergy “ to fulfil a main end of
 “ their ministration, by superintending the
 “ education of those, who without their
 “ care, will have no religious education at
 “ all ; no sense of a Supreme Being ; no
 “ hope of the redemption which is in Jesus;
 “ but

“ but who will continue to be Pagans, as
 “ it were, in the bosom of the Church
 “ of Christ.” Now I cannot conceive
 how it is possible for the clergy to super-
 intend the education of all the children in
 their respective parishes, unless Sunday
 Schools were established throughout the
 kingdom; which is a measure devoutly to
 be wished, in order to preserve what re-
 mains of religion among us, and restore
 what is lost, as far as can be, among the
 great body of the people. The present
 Bishop of London, in a most excellent
 Charge, at his primary visitation of that
 diocese, very justly observes* that “ though
 “ there are in London and Westminster
 “ a multitude of Charity Schools, it will
 “ be found upon enquiry that numerous
 “ as they are, they comprehend but a
 “ very small part of the children of the
 “ poor, and that there are still, in almost

* Page the 14th.

“ every

" every parish, especially the larger ones,
 " many hundreds of ignorant wretched
 " young creatures of both sexes totally
 " destitute of all education, totally un-
 " acquainted with the very first elements
 " of religion, and who perhaps never once
 " entered within the walls of a church."

His Lordship therefore strongly recom-
 mends the establishment of Sunday Schools
 in every district of the metropolis. The
 above observation will hold good with re-
 gard to cities and towns of less size, as
 well as country parishes. Whatever
 Schools there may be in any or all of
 them, these are capable of receiving only
 a small part of the multitude of poor
 children, who stand in need of instruc-
 tion ; unless where Sunday Schools have
 been erected. In other places far the
 greater number of these unhappy young
 creatures will be left to remain in deplo-
 rable ignorance, and many will probably
 be

be guilty of crimes which will bring them to destruction both of body and soul. This is an argument, which always had, and always will have great force, in favor of the before mentioned institution, which has, I believe, been sanctioned by almost, if not all the Prelates upon the Bench; though it is as yet far from being made general. But the circumstances of the present day give additional weight to those reasons, which, in more quiet times, were thought to be amply sufficient, and originally gave it birth. We see how anxious the French rulers are to continue a succession of Atheists in that apostate nation. Clergymen are proscribed as tutors to youth, because it was thought probable that they would talk to their pupils on the subject of religion; all idea of which it seems to be the object of our unprincipled neighbours to eradicate and destroy. It is wonderful to observe, with what arrogant

rogant confidence the impious orator expressed himself concerning the glorious times, which were fast approaching, when a croud of disciples from all parts of Europe will flock to France, to learn among other things, “ *the perfection of the social* “ *system*, the seeds of the insurrections of “ the 14th of July, and the 10th of August, and of all those insurrections, “ which are spreading with such rapidity “ throughout Europe—so that these young “ strangers, on their return to their respective countries, may spread the same “ lights, and may operate, for *the happiness* “ *of mankind*, similar revolutions throughout the world.”* From such a magnificent description as this, who would not be inclined to think that another golden age was near at hand? Or who could

* Dupont's speech, translated and published by Mrs Hannah More, with some very ingenious and just remarks on it.

possibly

possibly conceive that any person had the assurance to talk at this rate of a country, which is arrived at such a deplorable pitch of profligacy and misery, that what Juvenal says of his own degenerate days conveys but a very faint, and much too favorable an idea of its present state.

* *Nona Ætas agitur, pejoraque secula ferri
Temporibus, quorum sceleri non invenit ipsa
Nomen & a nullo posuit natura metallo.*

But what our neighbours on the Continent have done, or are now doing, is not the only circumstance of alarm with regard to the important matter of Education; there are seminaries in the bosom of our own country, where instructions are given, that may be presumed to be near akin to the lectures of Conventional tutors. A noble Lord† asserted in Par-

C

liament

* Sat. 13, line 28, and following.

† Lord Beauchamp.—It would have been kind in the noble Lord, who, we cannot suppose meant to throw an odium

liament some time ago that Tom Paine's Works were taught at Sunday Schools. As nothing can be more different from the principles of Tom Paine, than the doctrines which are taught in the Sunday Schools of the Church of England, we are naturally led to suppose the schools alluded to have been set on foot by some of the sons of liberty, who do not hold communion with us, but have been trying all the means in their power to overturn our political and ecclesiastical Constitution. We know that a philosophical Gentleman, of an active and enterprising spirit, who has had much to do in directing the studies of some of our dissenting youth, was, on account of his known character, made a Citizen of France, and elected a Member of the National Convention,

on so useful an institution, had he specified the particular school, or schools, where those destructive doctrines are taught, that the saddle might be laid on the right horse.

which

which he has been imprudent enough to declare,* he considers as the greatest of honours. The Doctor is very ingenious in reconciling contradictions, but I apprehend he would find a difficulty in reconciling the before mentioned declaration with several texts of Scripture, and particularly with John v. verse 44. *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?*

A man, who scruples not to avow, that he considers his having been made a citizen of an Atheistical nation, and his election into an Assembly of Atheists as the greatest of honours, cannot be supposed, in my humble opinion, to seek the honour which cometh from God only, and how therefore can he believe?

* In his Appeal to the Public on the Subject of the riots at Birmingham.

What the Doctor's religious faith is at present, it would be no easy matter to ascertain; and it might be questioned whether he knows himself; or, if he knows what it is to-day, whether he knows what it will be to-morrow. For he has had, by his own confession, a very changeable Creed; and, if we may believe a famous Historian,* had some years ago a "scanty" one; several articles having been, as he expresses it, "cut out" one after another: And as this has been the case, that the knife or the scissars may since that time have been applied to the remainder is no unreasonable supposition. I do not however mean to insinuate that the Doctor is actually an Atheist; but I have a right to conclude from what he has said—he has not the abhorrence that every Christian ought to have of Atheism; which perhaps his partiality for

* Mr. Gibbon.

the other opinions of the Convention may lead him to think of with less severity, and to look upon as a venial error. But we, who have different notions on this subject; who are convinced, by the experience of every day, and every hour, that the miseries of anarchy may be much greater than those of despotism; which are indeed great enough. We, who are persuaded that nothing but the influence of religion can preserve the peace of the world, and insure to us the blessings of our happy Constitution, are bound by the strongest ties, to do all we can to retain that salutary influence; and to prevent our common people from being deceived by "evil men and seducers;" who have endeavoured, for the vilest purposes, to unsettle their minds; to make them discontented and ripe for sedition, if an opportunity should occur for erecting the Tree of Liberty as the standard of rebellion.

Con-

Concerning the utility of Sunday Schools, in general, it is not the design of this Address to argue. The subject has been handled by much abler writers, and the public opinion seems to be decisively in their favor. But my object is to represent that the peculiar circumstances of the present day call for more than ordinary exertions to render them more general, than they are at present, and, if possible, universal throughout the kingdom. The loose notions, which have been, and will be imported into this nation from France, cannot, by any other means, be prevented from taking a pernicious hold of vast numbers of poor children; as there neither are, nor can be any other schools established, that will be able to admit half the ignorant young creatures, who stand in great need of religious instruction; and who, if they do not receive it, we may expect will learn (as soon as they are capable of learning any thing) those monstrous

strous opinions, which the French Legislators have appointed shall be taught to their own youth; and which their agents here will, no doubt, continue to propagate among us with unceasing perseverance. We know that endeavours have been used by these common disturbers of mankind to persuade the lower classes in this country that all men are equal. It is therefore become the more necessary to impress on their minds, while young and tender, the duty of "behaving lowly and "reverently to all their betters." And as the doctrines of Atheism and Regicide are now so current among the French, and pass more freely than their Assignats, it is highly expedient that all our young people be brought up with a due horror of them, and be taught from their infancy, to fear God and honour the King.*

Un-

* The sagacious Empress of Russia is said to have been so thoroughly convinced of the utility of Sunday Schools, considered

Unless I am mistaken, most, if not all, the Prelates of England have recommended Sunday Schools in their sermons, or their charges; and we have only to lament that, although many schools have been erected, these laudable recommendations have not every where been so much attended to as they deserve. I will therefore request permission to represent with all due respect, to their Graces and Lordships, that it might be of material use, were they to make enquiry in their dioceses, what the obstacles are, that have prevented an institution, which has done so much good, where it has been tried, from being universally serviceable. Difficulties, I am sensible, may occur in some parishes more than in others; but difficulties often vanish when they are encountered with resolution and spirit; and in a matter of

dered in a political light, that she has invited the benevolent Projector of them, with liberal offers, to come and superintend their establishment throughout her vast empire.

so

so much importance it is worth while to take more than common pains to overcome them. The expence of these schools is so trifling, that this cannot be an hindrance in many places; and there is a Society in London which is ready to afford pecuniary assistance where it is wanted to promote these salutary establishments; and has already with praise-worthy generosity assisted 880. To the Prelates of this kingdom religion has always been accustomed to look up for support; and we may hope that with their protection and encouragement a partial good will become general; and that no parish in England will be deprived of that means of instruction, without which, the majority of the children in it cannot, according to the common course of things, be Christianly and virtuously brought up. Not even the smallest parishes ought to be excluded; for if it is not thought worth

D

while

while to erect a particular school in them, their children may be sent to some neighbouring parish that is larger, and some acknowledgement made for the instruction there received.

I will now beg leave to address a few words to the Parochial Clergy, “ whose
 “ patronage and assistance, above all, the
 “ institution solicits and implores; and
 “ under whose direction and superintendence, it should, if possible, be carried
 “ on.”* The occupation of instructing youth, either at public schools, in the Universities, or by private tuition, has always, in civilized countries, been deemed respectable. *Quod munus reipublicæ afferre majus, meliusve possumus, quam si docemus, atque erudimus Juventutem?* In our own nation it is commonly considered as one

* Extract from a Sermon of the late excellent Bishop of Norwich, preached at Canterbury, in recommendation of Sunday Schools.

of the readiest roads to preferment. Several of the greatest ornaments of our church are generally understood to owe their elevation, in some degree, to their being placed in this line of life, and discharging the important duties of it with fidelity and success. But can any Minister of Christ be of opinion that it is a more creditable employment to teach Homer and Virgil, Demosthenes and Cicero, Thucydides and Livy, with other branches of polite literature, than to instruct young people in the Gospel of Christ, and to shew them what they must do to be saved? From those who harbour such sentiments I shall for ever be proud to dissent. And, though I am far from disapproving of the Clergy being concerned in the education of young men of fortune, as I apprehend they have by this means more chance of being brought up Christians, (for I do not suppose that the English, like the French

tutors,

tutors, are forbid ever to talk on the subject of religion) I shall not hesitate to affirm that a Clergyman is occupied in a way, more agreeable to his character and profession, when he is explaining the Scriptures, or the Church Catechism to poor children at a Sunday School, than when he is lecturing a young nobleman in the Belles Lettres, or accompanying him on his travels in foreign parts. And I cannot help expressing a wish, that the Clergy would not think it beneath them, to attend (when they are able) to this humbler employment; which, though it is not likely to produce the emoluments of a Deanery, or a Prebend, much less the honour of a mitre, will one day be remembered and distinguished; if by the blessing of God it is instrumental in "turning many to righteousness."*

7 JU 66

* Daniel, xii. 3.

FINIS.

7

